

Black Canyon of the Gunnison

National Park
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

North Rim Hiking Trails

Animal and bird life abound on the North Rim. Some commonly seen animals include deer, coyote, porcupine, yellow-bellied marmot, chipmunk and squirrel. Occasional sightings are also made of badger, bobcat, and black bear. Bird watchers should keep an eye out for such species as red-tailed hawk, white-throated swift and violet-green swallow, Clark's nutcracker, raven, western tanager and falcon (prairie and peregrine).

Rock climbing on the sheer, vertical walls of the North Rim is a popular activity with advanced and expert level climbers. Remember this when you get the urge to throw a rock over the edge.

You can bike on the North Rim Road, but not on the trails. Pets on a leash are welcome everywhere except for the North Vista Trail.

Hikers should be aware that limited cattle grazing is permitted on the North Rim. Please keep cattle gates closed should you encounter them. Horseback riding is permitted only on the North Rim Drive and on Deadhorse Trail. Hikers should give riders the right of way by stepping off the trail and avoiding sudden movements or noise.

Chasm View Nature Trail

Moderate - 1/3 mile round trip

This trail is located at the end of the one-way campground loop. After a short distance, the trail breaks out of the pinyon/juniper forest at the North Chasm View, some 1800 feet above the river. Continuing near the rim, the trail reaches a second overlook with excellent views of Painted Wall and Serpent Point. Keep a lookout for swifts, swallows and raptors frequently seen from this overlook. The people you can see on the far side, at Chasm View overlook are only 1,100 feet away.

North Vista Trail

Moderate to Exclamation Point - 3 miles round trip

Strenuous to Green Mountain - 7 miles round trip

Constructed by volunteers for Outdoor Colorado, the North Vista Trail offers some of the best scenic views and birding in the Park. Start this trail at the North Rim Ranger Station. After passing through an area of sage and oak brush, the trail meanders in a pinyon/juniper forest along the canyon's rim. Several overlooks offer views of SOB draw and the inner canyon. At Exclamation Point some of the best inner-canyon views can be found. Those continuing to Green Mountain will be rewarded by panoramic vistas, including the San Juan Mountains, the West Elks, Grand Mesa, the Uncompahgre Plateau, and an aerial perspective of the Black Canyon.

Deadhorse Trail

Easy to moderate - 5 miles round trip

This trail offers good views of Deadhorse gulch and East Portal on the Gunnison River, as well as good birding. Park at the Kneeling Camel Overlook and walk a few yards east to a spur road that leads to the old Ranger Station. The trail, actually an old service road, begins here. After 3/4 of a mile the road passes a stock pond. This pond is fed by one of the few springs found on the rim of the Black Canyon. Continue on another 1 1/2 mile until you encounter a stock fence. Turn right (south) here and walk 1/4 mile along the fence until you come to the canyon's rim. Deadhorse Gulch is the large side drainage located just east of the overlook (and the fence).